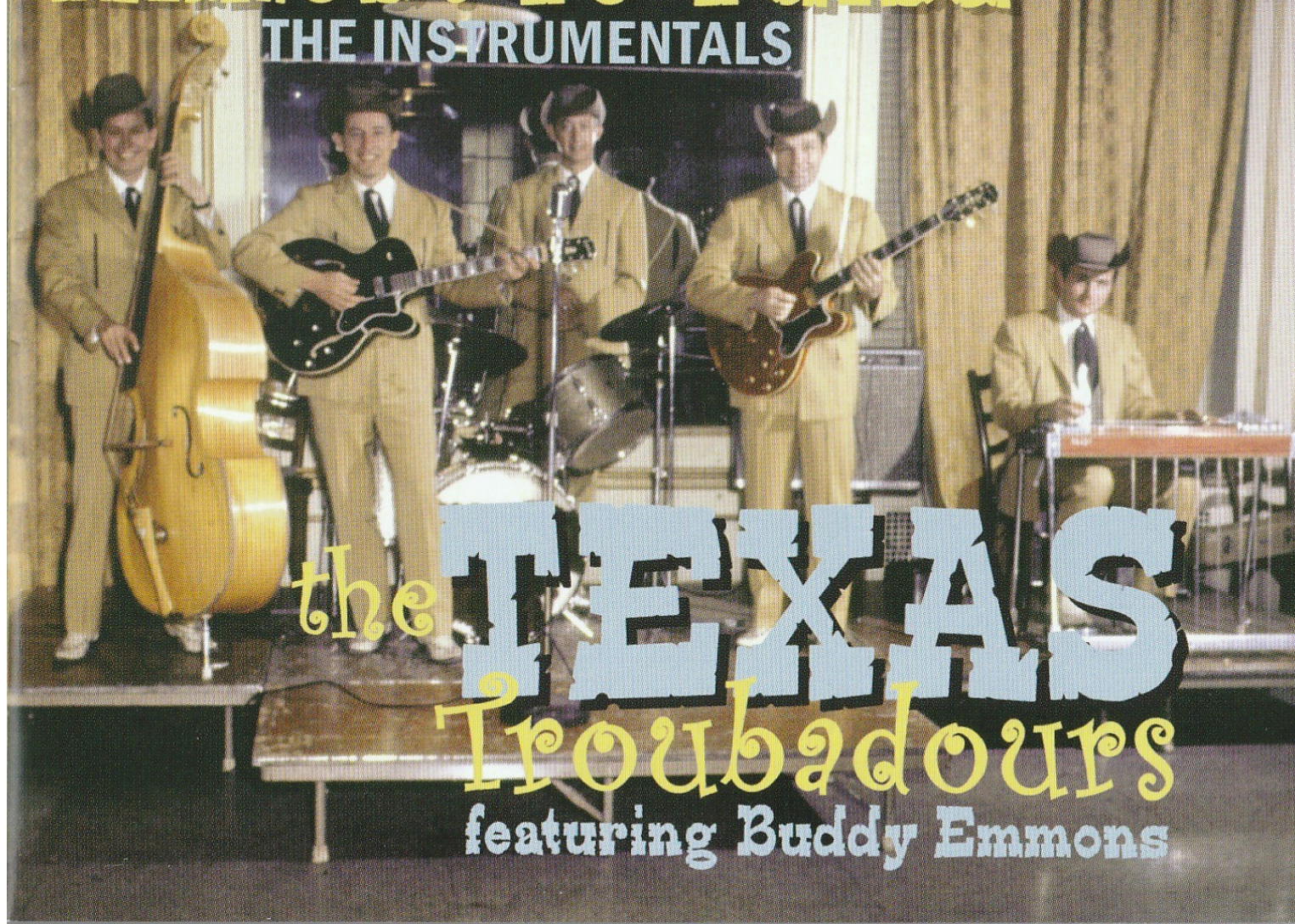


DECCA RECORDS
presents
ERNEST TUBB'S TEXAS
TROUBADOURS

Almost To Tulsa

THE INSTRUMENTALS



the **TEXAS**
Troubadours
featuring Buddy Emmons



the **TEXAS** Troubadours featuring Buddy Emmons

Diehard country music fans know that certain well-known singers had backing bands that achieved legendary status on their own. At the top of the heap, rabidly discussed by fans, worshipped by fellow musicians, were bands that included 'star sidemen,' or musicians that achieved fame on their own without benefit of a hit record. Ernest Tubb was well known for including 'star sidemen' in many of the various line-ups of his Texas Troubadours. Tubb had first achieved success in the 1940s and would continue touring with dozens of different line-ups of Troubadours over the next five decades before retiring from the road in 1982.

Some of the best-known Troubadours during the early years included the brothers Jimmie and Leon Short, and lead guitarists 'Butterball' Paige and Billy Byrd. Tubb's road bands varied from good to excellent, from well rehearsed to ragged, depending on the chemistry and the virtuosity of the musicians in the group. Tubb was quite like many country music stars of the era in that he insisted his bands play note-for-note from his records, and not venture out on wild improvised solos during his shows. What made him different was that outside of his showcase set, he encouraged his groups to do whatever they wanted to do during their opening warm-up sets.



from left: Leon Rhodes, Johnny Johnson, Jack Drake, Buddy Charleton, Jack Greene, Ernest Tubb

Part of the reason for this was a shift in the sort of shows that Ernest Tubb was playing after rock 'n' roll decimated country music's audience in the mid-1950s. Tubb went from playing fairs and auditoriums to playing the dance hall circuit that required his band to play for several hours, keeping the dancers on the dance floor for an evening's worth of entertainment.

As a result of this shift, beginning in the late 1950s with Buddy Emmons' arrival in the group, through several incarnations of the band until the mid-1970s, the Texas Troubadours became known as one of the most adventurous, free-swinging and musically entertaining bands in the country music business. Tubb biographer Ronnie Pugh has dubbed this line-up of the Texas Troubadours as 'The Great Band,' and the recordings on this set certainly testify to this fact.

The backbone of 'The Great Band' was Jack Drake on bass, as much responsible for the music included herein as any single person. Drake, the bass-playing brother of legendary steel guitarist Pete Drake, had been playing with Tubb since 1944 (with just one brief absence), and was Tubb's right-hand man for decades. Drake was the man Tubb entrusted with the job of hiring musicians, and as such, Drake took his job seriously. Drake was constantly watching the local opening acts while on tour, taking down phone numbers and addresses of musicians he felt might be good for the Texas Troubadours, if not immediately then somewhere down the line.

Several other stable musicians stayed in the Troubadour uniforms for many years. On drums in the early 1960s was a blonde Swede from the Pacific Northwest, Jan Kurtis Skuggstad, who shortened his name to simply Jan Kurtis during his stint with the band. Kurtis can be heard on some of the earlier recordings on this collection. Replacing Kurtis in 1962 was Jack Greene, touted



from left: Buddy Emmons, Jan Kurtis, Johnny Johnson, Jack Drake, Leon Rhodes, Ernest Tubb

by Tubb as "*my big-eared singing drummer.*" Greene would firmly establish himself as a singing star in his own right in later years, but during his tenure with the Troubadours, he endeared himself to Tubb by not only singing and playing drums, but also by showing his expertise with bus repair whenever Tubb's tour bus, 'The Green Hornet,' broke down in the middle of nowhere.

Johnny Johnson was Tubb's rhythm guitarist, emcee and right-hand man from 1958 until 1962, when he was replaced by another mainstay - Calvin Grant Shofner, better known as Cal Smith. Smith would also go on to find fame, with a successful solo career, but from 1962 until 1966 he was another key player in the solid rhythm section of the group.

The beginning of the truly great Troubadours line-up came in 1958, when guitarist Billy Byrd lobbied Jack Drake and Tubb to hire Buddy Emmons on steel guitar. Emmons was a veteran of Little Jimmy Dickens Country Boys, where he played jaw-dropping three part harmony lines with guitarists Thumbs Carlille and Spider Wilson. Through his work with Dickens and his session work around Nashville, Emmons was quickly becoming known as a great... perhaps the greatest... steel guitar player.

Initially reluctant to hire a musician with such a jazzy and freewheeling touch on the steel guitar, Emmons soon proved his worth with his playing on Tubb's hit recording of Roger Miller's *Half A Mind*. Emmons was allowed to stay in the band, and the Troubadours immediately went from merely a backup band to a band with their own identity. Although Billy Byrd would leave in 1959 (as did Emmons), Emmons would return soon thereafter to create the nucleus of what would become 'The Great Band.'



from left: Johnny Johnson, Jack Drake, Ernest Tubb, Jack Greene,
Leon Rhodes, Buddy Charleton

The first recordings on this disc are essentially Buddy Emmons solo recordings. The other musicians were Nashville session men, and were not members of the Texas Troubadours. The session from October 5, 1959, yielded four steel guitar instrumentals, two of which were released as a single on Decca - *Four Wheel Drive* and *Blue Wind*. The other two remained unissued until now, and are a delight to hear - *Highland Swing* and *Greensleeves*. Emmons recorded just three more instrumentals during 1960 and 1961, all heard here. These songs were done on various sessions with the Texas Troubadours behind him - *Rose City Chimes*, written by another Troubadour steel guitar man, Bobby Garrett; a cover of Speedy West's *This Ain't The Blues* - and a show-stopping virtuosic performance of the old warhorse *Danny Boy*.

Although Buddy Emmons time within the Texas Troubadours organization certainly set the bar for jazzy improvisation and musical excellence, the Troubadours' story also revolves around two other phenomenal musicians who're amply heard on this disc, guitarist Leon Rhodes and steel guitarist Buddy Charleton.

Leon Rhodes was born in Dallas in 1932 and started playing guitar on the Big D Jamboree in 1948 at the age of 16. Although guitar playing was a natural gift, his passion was baseball and softball, and he played in five national tournaments as a professional infielder on a fast-pitch softball team. In the late 1950s, Rhodes was playing professional ball and working as a drummer in Clay Allen's trio at the Longhorn Ballroom in Dallas. Although he was primarily the drummer, he would sometimes step up to the microphone and play guitar. It was just another day at the Longhorn in 1959 when Ernest Tubb and the Texas Troubadours' bus pulled up to the ballroom in the afternoon, preparing for their concert that night.

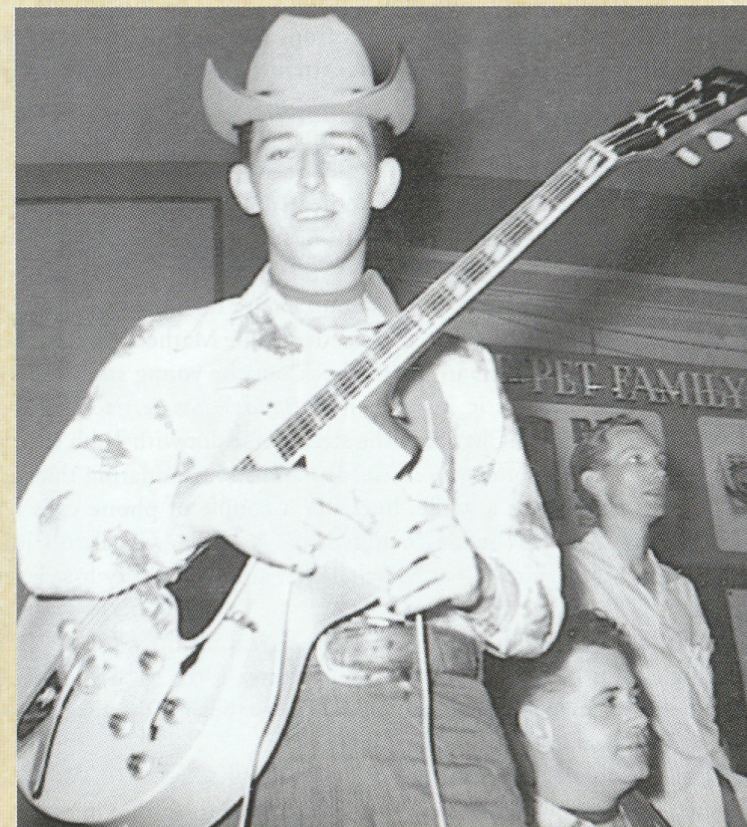


Buddy Emmons

Rhodes recalls a man watching the trio with great interest, who then walked up to the bandstand and asked if they could play an Ernest Tubb song, with some guitar picking in the style of 'Butterball' Paige. Rhodes thought it an odd request, since Ernest Tubb himself would be appearing later that evening on the same stage, but he complied. The man watching Rhodes play was Buddy Emmons, who sat Rhodes down for a drink (which Rhodes accepted on the grounds that he could drink a pop, as he was a teetotaler) with Jack Drake, who immediately offered Rhodes a spot with the Texas Troubadours. Rhodes was initially shocked, stating that he was a drummer, not a guitarist, but Emmons and Drake were persistent with their offer. After declining the offer several times, eventually Rhodes agreed to try a 13-day stint, which he liked so much that it turned into a 6-year tenure.

Leon Rhodes may have considered himself a drummer or a ball player, but the truth is that he is without question one of the great country-jazz guitar men, with a talent that puts him squarely in the league of men like Jimmy Bryant and Hank Garland. Rhodes claimed that guitar playing came naturally to him, and that he never found the fingering and phrasing difficult. Such a modest statement belies the fact that Rhodes is one of the fastest and most inventive of all the country-jazz players before or after him. One listen to the tracks on this disc is all it should take - your jaw should be resting squarely on the floor after hearing Leon Rhodes play the guitar.

Buddy Emmons' tenure with Ernest Tubb was short and not without drama. Emmons was strictly a jazzman, drawn to long late-night jam sessions and serious improvisation, and although he was allowed to cut loose with the Troubadours on their solo sets, the monotony of playing the note-for-note solos of Tubb's set began to bore him after a couple of years. By 1961, rumors were afoot that Emmons was thinking about quitting.



from left: Buddy Emmons, Bobby Garrett, Pete Drake

Patsy Cline heard the rumors that Emmons might be leaving the band, and recommended a young steel guitar player from Virginia to replace him. The steel player was young and inexperienced, but extremely promising, wowing audiences at his house gig at the Hunters' Lodge in Fairfax, Virginia. It was Elmer Lee Charleton, better known as 'Buddy' Charleton. He hailed from New Market, Virginia, and worked as a bricklayer while learning the ropes on steel guitar. He was one of the few steel guitarists in Virginia who played western swing, and he backed fellow Virginian Patsy Cline often in the early stages of her career.

When Ernest Tubb and the Texas Troubadours rolled through Virginia and performed at the Hunters' Lodge, bandleader Eddie Matherly made sure that his friend Buddy Emmons came inside to check out the young steel guitar prodigy performing Emmons' classic instrumental *Buddy's Boogie*. Jack Drake was so impressed that he offered Charleton the steel guitar slot with Tubb that night. As with Leon Rhodes, the offer was so sudden and so intimidating that Charleton had to think about it for a while, but after a couple of phone calls from Jack Drake, the decision was made to move to Nashville. Charleton joined the Troubadours at the beginning of March 1962, and would stay for eleven years.

Leon Rhodes and Buddy Charleton made a great team, and 'The Great Band' was firmly established. Over the next four years, 1962-1966, the band would remain constant, and it was these four years that established the Texas Troubadours as the greatest 'backing' band in country music.

The first order of business when Charleton joined the group in early 1962 was to finish an album that producer Owen Bradley had begun a year earlier. Bradley had attempted to imitate Hank Thompson's success with live albums by recording Ernest Tubb at Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa. Unfortunately, Tubb's rowdy audience



from left: Del Reeves with Buddy Emmons on the steel guitar (others unidentified)

had bled into the microphones and ruined the recordings, so Bradley's idea was to use the live spoken introductions from the Cain's recording along with newly recorded studio tracks. Tubb suggested that the band record *Steel Guitar Rag* for the new album. Buddy Charleton initially winced at the suggestion, since performing *Steel Guitar Rag* for a steel guitarist is the equivalent of reading a Dick and Jane primer for kindergartners. Leon Rhodes saved the day by suggesting a supercharged arrangement of the song that he had worked up with a band in Dallas. When the new line-up of Troubadours recorded *Steel Guitar Rag*, it became something else entirely. Everyone agreed that they were now a part of something larger that they had no control over - a group of musicians who blended together perfectly, who worked together like a well-oiled machine, the left hand sensing what the right was going to do, and vice versa.

Recorded at the same time was *Redskin Rag*, a Leon McAuliffe steel guitar instrumental from 1953. Leon Rhodes had played his arrangement of the song in earlier groups back in Dallas, and once again taught the arrangement to Charleton. It, like *Steel Guitar Rag*, was something spectacular. Rhodes and Charleton sensed each other's movements like the 1960s neutron equivalent of Speedy West and Jimmy Bryant's 1940s atomic power.

Steel Guitar Rag, *Redskin Rag*, and another instrumental, *Lover's Waltz*, were released on the 'Ernest Tubb's Texas Troubadours: On Tour' album, along with vocals by Tubb, Leon Rhodes, and Johnny Johnson. The new style of instrumentals on the album immediately caused a sensation, especially *Steel Guitar Rag*, which Ralph Emery played repeatedly on his nationwide radio interview show. Leon McAuliffe, who had changed the song from a blues number, *Guitar Rag*, to the tune we know, declared the Texas Troubadours' version to be the finest ever recorded.



Bobby Garrett

At this same time, Rhodes and Charleton began subtly adding slightly more complex backing to Ernest Tubb's arrangements. Tubb's music called for a simple backing, and although Tubb usually insisted that his musicians play the Billy Byrd and Butterball Paige solos note-for-note, Rhodes and Charleton began adding twin parts and arrangements to give Tubb an updated sound for the 1960s. It worked, and this era marked a comeback of sorts for Tubb (who scored hits with *Thanks A Lot* and *Waltz Across Texas* during this period). The Troubadours were also seen weekly on Tubb's popular syndicated television show.

The success of the 'On Tour' album prompted Decca to offer the Texas Troubadours an opportunity to record a 'solo' studio album. Thrilled with the chance, Rhodes and Charleton spent months preparing the songs, working on the arrangements in their hotel rooms. Rhodes and Charleton then rehearsed the songs for two days with the entire group at a bowling alley in New Jersey. As a result, when the group entered Bradley's studio to record 'Ernest Tubb Presents The Texas Troubadours,' Rhodes and Charleton performed the songs as if they had been playing them their entire lives.

The formula for the Texas Troubadours albums was simple - to show off the talents of the band that toured behind their famous boss. There were vocals by Jack Greene, Cal Smith, Johnny Wiggins, and Leon Rhodes - and a cluster of terrific Leon Rhodes and Buddy Charleton instrumentals. This formula would remain constant for all four of the Troubadours 'solo' albums.

Cain's Corner, *Texas Troubadour Stomp* and *Rhodes-Bud Boogie*, were all fantastic instrumentals that showcased the virtuosity of the new band. *Rhodes-Bud Boogie*, one of the best instrumentals Rhodes and Charleton ever recorded, almost didn't make the cut, after Rhodes and Charleton were rehearsing the song over and over



from left: Charlie Harris, Howard Rhoton, Buddy Emmons

in the studio, attempting to get it down perfectly. Owen Bradley piped in on the studio intercom that they might have to move on, but then Tubb arrived at the studio, and while Tubb and Bradley laughed in the studio control room for a few minutes, Rhodes and Charleton were finally able to get *Rhodes-Bud Boogie* down. The glorious result is heard here, and it's one of their finest moments.

Another of Leon McAuliffe's steel guitar standards, *Panhandle Rag*, was given a 1960s update, much as McAuliffe's *Steel Guitar Rag* and *Redskin Rag* had been updated earlier. Leon Rhodes recorded a solo guitar version of *12th Street Rag*, influenced by all the tenor banjo versions of the song that came before it, but clearly illustrating his frightening prowess. As Buddy Charleton told interviewer Rich Kienzle, "He (Leon) could play it that way with his gloves on." Charleton also contributed a steel guitar version of Wayne King's pop hit, *The Waltz You Saved For Me*, and it worked as a breather after all the wild uptempo numbers.

The album 'Ernest Tubb Presents The Texas Troubadours' sold reasonably well, helped by Jack Greene's riveting performance of Rex Griffin's *The Last Letter*, which was released as a single from the album.

Owen Bradley clearly had his sights on a second Troubadours 'solo' album, and began recording tracks soon after the release of the first. *Red Top*, the 1947 Lionel Hampton tune popularized by Gene Ammons, was recorded on the tail end of one of Tubb's sessions, and shortly thereafter the Troubadours began sessions for their next album, 'Country Dance Time.' One of the highlights of 'Country Dance Time' was Buddy Charleton's proudest moment, *Almost To Tulsa*. Charleton wrote the song while driving back from a tour in a rental car after Tubb's tour bus broke down. Hours of boredom behind the wheel lodged a melody in Charleton's mind and he immediately began playing it on the steel when he returned home from the tour. The song remains a classic and oft-covered steel guitar standard (one notable instance: Merle Haggard's steel guitarist Norm Hamlet would record a fine version of *Almost To Tulsa* on one of the Strangers' instrumental albums).



from left: Buddy Emmons, Bobby Garrett, Tommy Jackson

It was during this time period that Ernest Tubb (and the Troubadours) began endorsing Epiphone instruments. It was fairly unusual for country musicians to play Epiphones because they usually favored Gibson hollowbodies or Fender solidbodies. Epiphone sponsored the group, and soon Ernest was playing a top of the line Epiphone Excellante flat-top acoustic guitar, and Cal Smith and Leon Rhodes began playing thin-bodied Epiphone Sheraton guitars, the Epiphone equivalent of the Gibson ES-335. While unusual to see country musicians playing Epiphones, there was no doubt that Leon Rhodes could play a log strung with barbed wire and make it sound good. Rhodes chose not to use an Epiphone amp, however, choosing to remain loyal to his trusty Standel amp, also a favorite for country players.

Buddy Charleton, meanwhile, had replaced Buddy Emmons not only in the Troubadours, but also as the 'Bud' in the Sho-Bud steel guitar company. Sho-Bud was originally a partnership between Shot Jackson and Buddy Emmons, but when Emmons started his own steel guitar company (called simply Emmons), Shot Jackson asked Buddy Charleton to become his new 'Bud'. Consequently, Charleton played Sho-Bud steel guitars and amplifiers on the recordings from this era.

One major incident that happened during the recording of 'Country Dance Time' was a debacle that nearly broke up the Troubadours. Bossman Ernest Tubb was known for his occasional drunken binges. Usually the band performed the entire night for free whenever Tubb was unable to perform, a source of embarrassment for Tubb, but a positive move for the club-owners, who always had Tubb and the Troubadours back again. There was one moment, though, where Tubb's bad behavior crossed over the line.

It was 1964, and Tubb was scheduled to play a typical show in Maryland, outside Washington, D.C. Tubb was too drunk to play, so the band played the show for free, as per usual. After the show, Tubb confronted Cal Smith, drunk and mean. Smith left the bus to avoid a confrontation and hitched a ride to Washington to find a bus back to Nashville. After Smith jumped off the bus, Tubb then confronted Jack Greene, telling Greene of his drumming deficiencies. Greene also left the bus a short piece down the road in Warrenton, Virginia, where he got on the same Greyhound that Cal Smith was also riding home on. The pair discussed their plans post-Ernest Tubb and vowed not to return to the fold.

After things cooled off, the pair agreed to meet with the boss in Nashville, but were still determined to quit. When Smith and Greene saw how ashamed and embarrassed Tubb was about the incident, they finally agreed to come back. Much to everyone's surprise, this incident was the final one - Tubb quit drinking and remained sober until his death in 1984.

Putting the drama behind them, the Troubadours went back into the studio to finish 'Country Dance Time.' In addition to more vocal tracks by Cal Smith, Jack Greene, Leon Rhodes and even bassist Jack Drake (whose version of *Detour*, not included here, is worth seeking out for the brilliant Rhodes-Charleton solos), several more great instrumentals were laid down. Leon Rhodes recorded three different versions of *Leon's Guitar Boogie*, with the first being quite similar to the Arthur 'Guitar Boogie' Smith hit *Guitar Boogie*, but the other versions were quite different and showcased Rhodes veering out into brilliant unexplored territory. All three versions of the song are included here, and you can hear the difference in each version for yourself. Rhodes also recorded the ballad *Twilight Over Texas*, proving that he could not only burn fast, he could also show a slow and moody side. Rhodes and Charleton did one more duet instrumental for 'Country Dance Time' with a furious version of Duke Ellington's *C-Jam Blues*.



Buddy Emmons with Little Jimmy Dickens

Once again the sales of 'Country Dance Time' were enough to convince Owen Bradley to start planning the next Texas Troubadours 'solo' album. Using the same idea as the 'On Tour' album, Bradley decided to use spoken word introductions and audience noise from three concert locations - the Esquire Club near Houston, the Magic Castle Ballroom south of Seattle, Washington, and Austin Wood's Nashville Opry Auditorium at the Lake Of The Ozarks in Missouri. These live introductions were then spliced on studio recordings done at Bradley's studio in Nashville. Why Bradley didn't attempt a real 'live' album is not known, but perhaps his frustrating attempt at Cain's Ballroom kept him from experimenting again. For a fascinating glimpse into what a real 'live' Ernest Tubb concert of the era sounded like, it's worth tracking down the now out-of-print 'Ernest Tubb - Live In 1965' disc, released about ten years ago from a tape that ex-Troubadour drummer Jan Kurtis recorded at the same Magic Castle near Seattle.

The new pseudo-live album was titled 'Hittin' The Road With The Texas Troubadours,' and the band began recording tracks for the new album in April 1965. For our intents and purposes, the album was somewhat disappointing since it only contained two instrumentals.

Big Beaver was the old Bob Wills tune, given an updated western swing sound by Rhodes and Charleton. *Cocoanut Grove*, an old jazz standard made popular by many of the great big bands (as well as a hit vocal by Sammy Davis Jr. around the time that the Troubadours recorded it), was revved up and given the Rhodes-Charleton treatment. Both instrumentals were excellent, but 'Hittin' The Road With The Texas Troubadours' was mostly a vocal showcase for Jack Greene, Cal Smith and the other boys in the band.

Leon Rhodes had a flash of inspiration and used an acoustic guitar on Ernest Tubb's *Waltz Across Texas*, which despite Tubb's initial protestations turned out to be a memorable idea on one of Tubb's biggest songs of the 1960s. Rhodes continued to use the acoustic for several songs on 'Hittin' The Road,' including *Cocoanut Grove*.

A full year went by until the Troubadours recorded again. 'Ernest Tubb's Fabulous Texas Troubadours' was the last recording of the great Leon Rhodes and Buddy Charleton duo, and the album was a fitting swan song for Rhodes.

Perhaps the finest Troubadours instrumental, *Honey Fingers*, was recorded for this album, and *Take That* was close behind in sheer virtuosity. Both tracks featured the session drummer Len Miller, who kicked the jazz intensity up a notch beyond Jack Greene's simple backing. *Honey Fingers* remains the benchmark against which all other Troubadours instrumentals can be measured. Buddy Charleton remembers that he told Leon Rhodes he didn't think he could play that fast, but Rhodes reassured him that if he played fast enough, people wouldn't be able to hear the notes that he missed. *Honey Fingers* may be the finest guitar and steel guitar instrumental ever recorded, equaling and perhaps eclipsing anything that Speedy West and Jimmy Bryant ever did. The song was simply phenomenal, an explosive display of 'The Great Band' hitting on all cylinders.

E.T. Blues was also recorded for the album, a much simpler instrumental in the style of boss man Tubb, with Jack Greene adding extra "oomph" on the drums. *Cool It* was a Charleton steel guitar burner, written for the members of Ray Price's fan club in Pennsylvania, who had given Charleton a diamond ring with 'B.C.' on it.

Sessions for the album were completed four months later, in August 1966. Two more instrumentals were recorded, including Leon Rhodes 12-string instrumental version of Tubb's biggest hit *Walking The Floor Over You*, and a Johnny Gimble original, *Gardenia Waltz*. Apparently the band was one song shy at the studio, and Bob Wills alumnus Gimble suggested *Gardenia Waltz*.

Sadly, the August 1966 sessions turned out to be the last recordings for Leon Rhodes as a Texas Troubadour. What began as a simple pay dispute turned into one of the saddest moments in Ernest Tubb's career. Bassman Jack Drake suggested to Leon Rhodes that Leon should ask for a small raise, so that the entire band could follow in his footsteps. Tubb denied Rhodes' request, and Rhodes then gave one month's notice that he was leaving the band. Tubb, apparently unconvinced that Rhodes would actually leave, waited until the last day of Rhodes' employment before offering him the raise he had asked for, and offering to extend the raise to the entire band. Rhodes replied that he had already been hired for studio work, and that it was too late. Tubb was furious, not believing that Rhodes would really leave. Without his right-hand-guitar-picking man, he turned control of the band over to Buddy Charleton, who began looking for a replacement for Rhodes. Leon Rhodes, for his part, never regretted the move, stating in an interview with Rich Kienzle that he had earned more in the first few months of his work as a session musician than he had made in six years of working for Tubb.

What happened next was quite ugly in the world of close-knit 1960s Nashville. Tubb used his connections to make sure that Leon couldn't do certain jobs around town, and was barred from playing Ernest Tubb's Midnight Jamboree broadcast. When rumors persisted that Rhodes had left the band because he owed Tubb a large sum of money, Rhodes finally took his case to the Nashville Musician's Union, who found Tubb's wife Olene had been spreading the untrue rumors about him.



from left: Buddy Emmons, Bob Meadows, Bobby Garrett

The Union ruled in Rhodes' favor, but the case effectively destroyed any relationship between Leon Rhodes and Ernest Tubb for the rest of Tubb's life.

Losing a monster player like Leon Rhodes was a huge blow to the group. There was simply no way they were going to find a player as good as Rhodes. Buddy Charleton began searching for a new guitar man, and eventually decided on fellow Virginian Steve Chapman, who had spent time playing for Reno and Smiley and Charlie Louvin. The choice of Chapman on guitar was a surprising one, since Chapman was not a country-jazz or western swing player at all, but Charleton was convinced of his mettle over anything else, and Chapman was hired in late 1966, and would remain in the group until 1969.

Other major changes took place in the Tubb organization following Leon Rhodes' departure. In short, 'The Great Band' slowly disintegrated one member at a time. Next to go was Jack Greene, who left in the spring of 1967 to promote his own career following his breakout solo hit single *There Goes My Everything*. The split with Tubb was amicable, and Tubb told him to come back and be a Troubadour again if his solo career didn't work out.

Cal Smith remained in the Troubadours, but following his recording contract with Kapp Records, he was not allowed to sing on the Troubadours' records. He continued to play rhythm guitar until his departure from the band in late 1968. That year, Tubb's long-serving bassist Jack Drake left the band due to health problems (both Drake and Tubb would eventually die of emphysema, brought on by years of barroom smoking). Drake would continue working in the publishing and record label end of the business until his death four years later in 1972.

With all this turnover and turmoil in the Tubb organization, there was still time to record one more 'solo' Troubadours album in 1968. Entitled 'The Terrific Texas Troubadours And Friends,' it was less a showcase for the actual Troubadours band than it was a guest star record. Jack Greene came back to guest on a few vocals. Wade Ray, fiddler and vocalist who had spent time in Willie Nelson's band in Texas, contributed several songs to the record. Session men Jerry Smith and Jerry Shook were also present, both of whom had been background players on previous Troubadours records, but on this last album their presence was more notable than before. New bass man Buck Evens had a vocal spot, as did new guitarist Steve Chapman.

A session on February 20, 1968, yielded four instrumentals for the 'Terrific Troubadours' LP. Steve Chapman demonstrated his own style of playing on *Nashville Shuffle*, free of Leon Rhodes' lurking shadow; it shows that Chapman was a fine guitarist in his own right. In the same vein, *Ridgetop Stomp* was a Chapman-Charleton collaboration that was completely different than anything Rhodes and Charleton had done, but quite good in its own right. Erskine Hawkins' jazz standard *Tuxedo Junction* really swings with guest fiddle from Wade Ray. Buddy Charleton covered Buddy Emmons' *Buddy's Boogie*, an Emmons number from the old 'Little' Jimmy Dickens era. It was a fine homage to the man who had preceded him in the Troubadours.

The final Troubadours instrumental, *Jamming With C And C*, was recorded two weeks later, completing the 'Terrific Troubadours' album sessions. *Jamming With C And C* was an interesting way to go out for the Troubadours, with a complex jazz approach resembling something Thelonious Monk would have done, quite different even from the Leon Rhodes-Buddy Charleton country jazz approach from a few years earlier. *Jamming With C And C* shows that the Chapman and Charleton combination was interesting in its own right.



from left: Leon Rhodes, Buddy Emmons

Buddy Charleton hung on until 1973 then went back to Virginia to find another calling. He became a steel guitar teacher, a role he relishes to this day. Ernest Tubb and the Texas Troubadours kept rolling along, of course, and Tubb himself became one of the most beloved and iconic figures within country music. He would eventually retire from the road in 1982 and passed away in 1984.

The legacy of the 1960s Texas Troubadours remains intact to this day. The great Leon Rhodes-Buddy Charleton combination still remains the team to beat for many country-jazz aficionados. The recordings on this collection are an essential part of any country-jazz library, and any guitarist, steel guitarist, or musician will find the performances exhilarating. Finally, at long last, we now have all these fantastic instrumentals in one place.

Perhaps Leon Rhodes said it best, to interviewer Rich Kienzle, for the fourth Ernest Tubb box set liner notes: *"Even today, I still have players that come in at the Opry that want me to show them how I did or how I played this certain lick on these things. Those instrumentals were on fire, and people today still feel that in them. It's there."*

Rhodes' statement couldn't be truer - the fire is most certainly still on these recordings. Marvel and enjoy.

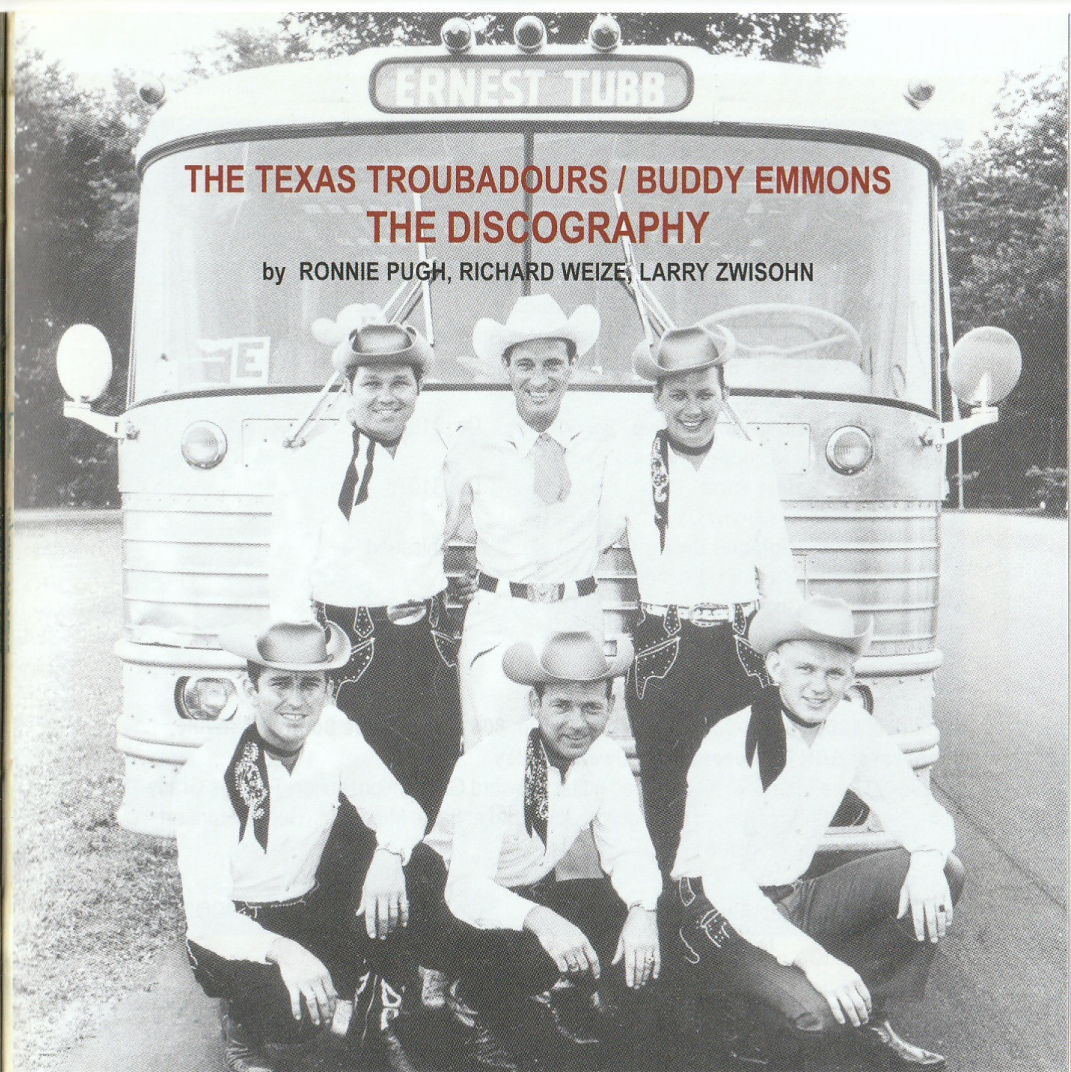
Deke Dickerson

Northridge, California
September 2007

**Thanks to: Ronnie Pugh, Leon Rhodes,
Buddy Charleton, Jim Hilmar.**

-30-

from left (standing) Leon Rhodes,
Ernest Tubb, Jack Drake; (kneeling) Buddy
Emmons, Johnny Johnson, Jan Kurtis



This discography is a chronological listing of their instrumental recordings. The exact format is as follows:

1. date; 2. location; 3. producer; 4. personnel; 5. discography opus number; 6. master number; 7. title; 8. 78rpm releases; 9. LP/CD releases; 10. World master number; 11. composer/writer

October 8, 1959, (19:30-22:30); Bradley Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; A&R Representative: Owen Bradley

Buddy Gene Emmons: steel guitar; Harold Ray Bradley: guitar; James Clayton 'Jimmy' Day: bass; Douglas Kirkham: drums; Owen Bradley: contractor

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. NA 10872 | Four Wheel Drive | De 31076 |
| 108 283 | (Buddy Emmons) | |
| 2. NA 10873 | Blue Wind | De 31076 |
| 108 284 | (Jimmy Day) | |
| 3. NA 10874 | Highland Swing | De unissued |
| 108 285 | (Buddy Emmons) | |
| 4. NA 10875 | Greensleeves | De unissued |
| 108 286 | (Public Domain) | |

March 30, 1960, (00:00-03:00); Bradley Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; A&R Representative: Owen Bradley

Buddy Gene Emmons: electric lead guitar; Howard G. Johnson: guitar; Thomas Grady Martin: guitar; Bobby Garrett: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Murrey M. 'Buddy' Harman, Jr: drums; Floyd Cramer: piano

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 5. NA 11073 | This Ain't The Blues | BCD 15688 |
| 109 014 | (Speedy West) | |



from left: Buddy Emmons, Johnny Bush and Ben Dorsey

May 28, 1961 (20:15-23:15); Bradley Film & Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Howard G. 'Johnny' Johnson: rhythm guitar; Thomas Grady Martin: 2nd lead guitar; Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Buddy Gene Emmons: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jan Kurtis: drums; Hargus M. 'Pig' Robbins: piano

6. NA 11564 **Danny Boy** BCD 15929-1/2
110 702 (PD)

June 29, 1961 (20:30-23:30); Bradley Film & Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Walter L. 'Hank' 'Sugarfoot' Garland: 2nd lead guitar; Howard G. 'Johnny' Johnson: rhythm guitar; Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Buddy Gene Emmons: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jan Kurtis: drums; Dale Potter: fiddle

7. NA 11606 **Rose City Chimes** (Buddy Emmons: steel instrumental)
110 803 (Bobby Garrett) BCD 15929-1/5

March 1, 1962 (19:15-22:15); Columbia Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

poss. Howard G. 'Johnny' Johnson: lead guitar; Thomas Grady Martin: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Buddy Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jan Kurtis: drums; Floyd Cramer: piano

8. NA 11936 **Steel Guitar Rag** BCD 15929-1/9
111 911 (Leon McAuliffe-Bob Wills)

9. NA 11937 **Redskin Rag** BCD 15929-1/10
111 912 (Bob Kiser-Leon McAuliffe)

March 4, 1962 (19:15-22:15); Columbia Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Howard G. 'Johnny' Johnson: rhythm guitar; Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Thomas Grady Martin: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jan Kurtis: drums; Floyd Cramer: piano

10. NA 11945 **Lover's Waltz** BCD 15929-1/17
111 906 (Leon Rhodes-Clay Allen)

July 23, 1963 (19:00-23:00); Columbia Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: leader/guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Harold Ray Bradley: electric bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Floyd Cramer: piano

11. NA 12592 **Cain's Corner** DL 74459;
113 878 (George McCoy-Leon Rhodes-Clay Allen) BCD 15929-3/10
12. NA 12593 **Rhodes'-Bud Boogie** DL 74459;
113 879 (Leon Rhodes-Bud Charleton-Clay Allen) BCD 15929-3/11
13. NA 12595 **Panhandle Rag** DL 74459;
113 881 (Leon McAuliffe) BCD 15929-3/13

July 24, 1963 (14:00-18:00); Columbia Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: leader/guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Harold Ray Bradley: electric bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Floyd Cramer: piano

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|-----|----------|--|----------------|
| 14. | NA 12596 | Texas Troubadour Stomp | DL 74459; |
| | 113 882 | (Leon Rhodes-Bud Charleton-Clay Allen) | BCD 15929-3/14 |
| 15. | NA 12599 | 12th Street Rag | DL 74459; |
| | 113 885 | (Euday L. Bowman-Andy Razaf) | BCD 15929-3/17 |
| 16. | NA 12601 | The Waltz You Saved For Me | DL 74459; |
| | 113 887 | (Wayne King-Emil Flindt-Gus Kahn) | BCD 15929-3/19 |

October 14, 1964 (22:00-01:00); Columbia Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Harold Ray Bradley: electric bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Jerry D. Smith: piano

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|-----|----------|------------------|---------------|
| 17. | NA 13115 | Red Top | DL 74644; |
| | 115 307 | (Hampton-Kynard) | BCD 15929-4/6 |

October 19, 1964 (22:00-01:00); Columbia Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: leader/guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Jerry W. Shook: rhythm guitar; John Wiggins: guitar; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Jerry D. Smith: piano

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|-----|----------|------------------------|----------|----------------|
| 18. | NA 13138 | Almost To Tulsa | De 32185 | DL 74644; |
| | 115 334 | (Bud Charleton) | | BCD 15929-4/13 |

December 8, 1964 (18:00-21:00); Columbia Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: leader/guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Jerry W. Shook: rhythm guitar; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Hargus M. 'Pig' Robbins: piano

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|------|----------|--|----------------|
| 19. | NA 13189 | Leon's Guitar Boogie | BCD 15929-4/15 |
| | 115 459 | (Leon Rhodes-Bill Dycus) | |
| 19A. | NA 13189 | Leon's Guitar Boogie (different take) | BCD 15929-4/29 |
| | 115 459 | (Leon Rhodes-Bill Dycus) | |
| 20. | NA 13191 | Twilight Over Texas | DL 74644; |
| | 115 461 | (Clay Allen-Leon Rhodes) | BCD 15929-4/17 |

December 14, 1964 (18:00-21:00); Columbia Recording Studio, 804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: leader/guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Jerry W. Shook: rhythm guitar; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Jerry D. Smith: piano

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|-----|----------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 21. | NA 13196 | C-Jam Blues | DL 74644; |
| | 115 479 | (Duke Ellington) | BCD 15929-4/19 |
| 22. | NA 13198 | Leon's Guitar Boogie | De 31837 |
| | 115 481 | (Leon Rhodes-Bill Dycus) | DL 74644; |
| | | | BCD 15929-4/21 |

April 19, 1965 (18:00-21:00); RCA Victor Studio, 806 17th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: lead guitar/electric guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Jerry W. Shook: rhythm guitar; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Jerry D. Smith: piano

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|-----|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| 23. | NA 13397 | Big Beaver | BCD 15929-5/24 |
| | 115 971 | (Bob Wills) | |

April 20, 1965 (18:00-21:00); RCA Victor Recording Studios, 806 17th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Jerry W. Shook: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Jerry D. Smith: piano

24. NA 13402 **Cocoanut Grove** BCD 15929-5/25
115 976 (Harry Owens)

April 4, 1966; RCA Victor Recording Studios, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Jerry W. Shook: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Jerry D. Smith: piano

25. NA 14008 **E.T. Blues** De 32065 DL 74745
117 212 (Leon Rhodes-Bud Charleton)

April 6, 1966 (18:00-21:00); RCA Victor Recording Studios, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Jerry W. Shook: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Jerry D. Smith: piano

26. NA 14019 **Cool It** DL 74745
117 238 (Bud Charleton)

April 6, 1966 (18:00-21:00); RCA Victor Recording Studios, Nashville, Tennessee;

Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Jerry W. Shook: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Len Miller: drums; Hargus M. 'Pig' Robbins: piano

27. NA 14029 **Honey Fingers** De 32121 DL 74745
117 641 (Clay Allen-Leon Rhodes)
28. NA 14030 **Take That** DL 74745
117 642 (Bun Wilson-Doc Richardson)

August 11, 1966 (18:00-21:00); RCA Victor Recording Studios, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Leon Rhodes: lead guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar; Jerry W. Shook: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar; Jack Drake: bass; Jack H. 'Jack' Greene: drums; Hargus M. 'Pig' Robbins: piano

29. NA 14192 **Gardenia Waltz** De 32121 DL 74745
117 813 (Johnny Gimble)
30. NA 14193 **Walking The Floor Over You** De 32065 DL 74745
117 814 (Ernest Tubb)

February 20, 1968 (18:00-21:00); Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Steve Chapman: lead guitar; 'Buck' Evans: guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar;
Jerry W. Shook: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar;
Jack Drake: bass; Bill Pfender: drums; Wade Ray: fiddle; Jerry D. Smith: piano

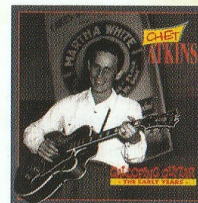
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| 31. | NA 15022 | Tuxedo Junction | DL 75017 |
| | 119 979 | (Erskine Hawkins-Julian Dash-William Johnson-Buddy Feyne) | |
| 32. | NA 15023 | Nashville Shuffle | DL 75017 |
| | 119 980 | (Jimmy Capps) | |
| 33. | NA 15024 | Ridgetop Stomp | De 32587 DL 75017 |
| | 119 981 | (Bud Charleton-Steve Chapman) | |
| 34. | NA 15025 | Buddie's Boogie | DL 75017 |
| | 119 982 | (Buddy Emmons) | |

March 5, 1968 (18:00-21:00); Tennessee; Producer: Owen Bradley

Steve Chapman: lead guitar; 'Buck' Evans: guitar; Cal Smith (Grant C. Shofner): rhythm guitar;
Jerry W. Shook: 2nd lead guitar or electric bass; Elmer Lee 'Buddy' Charleton: steel guitar;
Jack Drake: bass; Bill Pfender: drums; Wade Ray: fiddle; Bob Wilson: piano

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|-----|----------|-----------------------------|----------|
| 35. | NA 15042 | Jamming With C And C | De 32587 |
| | 120 047 | () | |

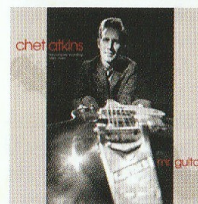
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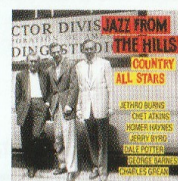
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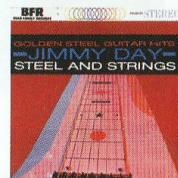


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- Fiddle Sticks - In A Little Spanish Town - Sweet Georgia Brown - The Lady In Red - When It's
Darkness On The Delta - Indiana March (master) - The Vacation Train - Indiana March (take 1) -
Song Of The Wanderer (Where Shall I Go) - Royal Garden Blues - I'll See You In My Dreams -
Royal Garden Blues (take 1)

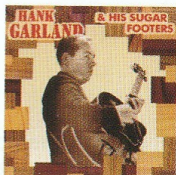


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The Blues - Indian Love Call - Please Help Me, I'm Falling - I Love You Because - Am I That Easy
To Forget - A Fallen Star - He Thinks I Still Care - Making Believe - I Love You So Much It Hurts -
Wild Side Of Life - Release Me - Funny How Time Slips Away - I Can't Stop Loving You - I Fall To
Pieces

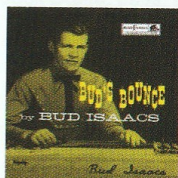


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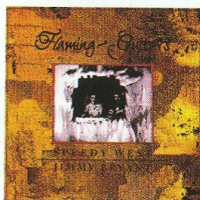


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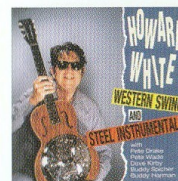
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CD 3: On The Alamo - Rolling Sky - The Night Rider - Hillcrest (Opus 3) - China Boy (version 1) - China Boy (version 2) - Hawaiian War Chant - Song Of The Islands - On The Beach Of Waikiki - My Tane - Drifting And Dreaming (Sweet Paradise) - My Little Grass Shack In Kealakakua, Hawaii - Sweet Hawaiian Chimes - Blue Hawaii - Yaaka Hula Hickey Dula - The Moon Of Manakoor - Ka-Lu-A - Luna - Reflections From The Moon - Space Man In Orbit - Lazy Summer Evening - Double Or Nothing - Afternoon Of A Swan - Wild And Woolly West - Rippling Waters - Totem Pole Dance - Slow And Easy - Speedy's Special - Sunset At Waikiki - Tulsa Twist

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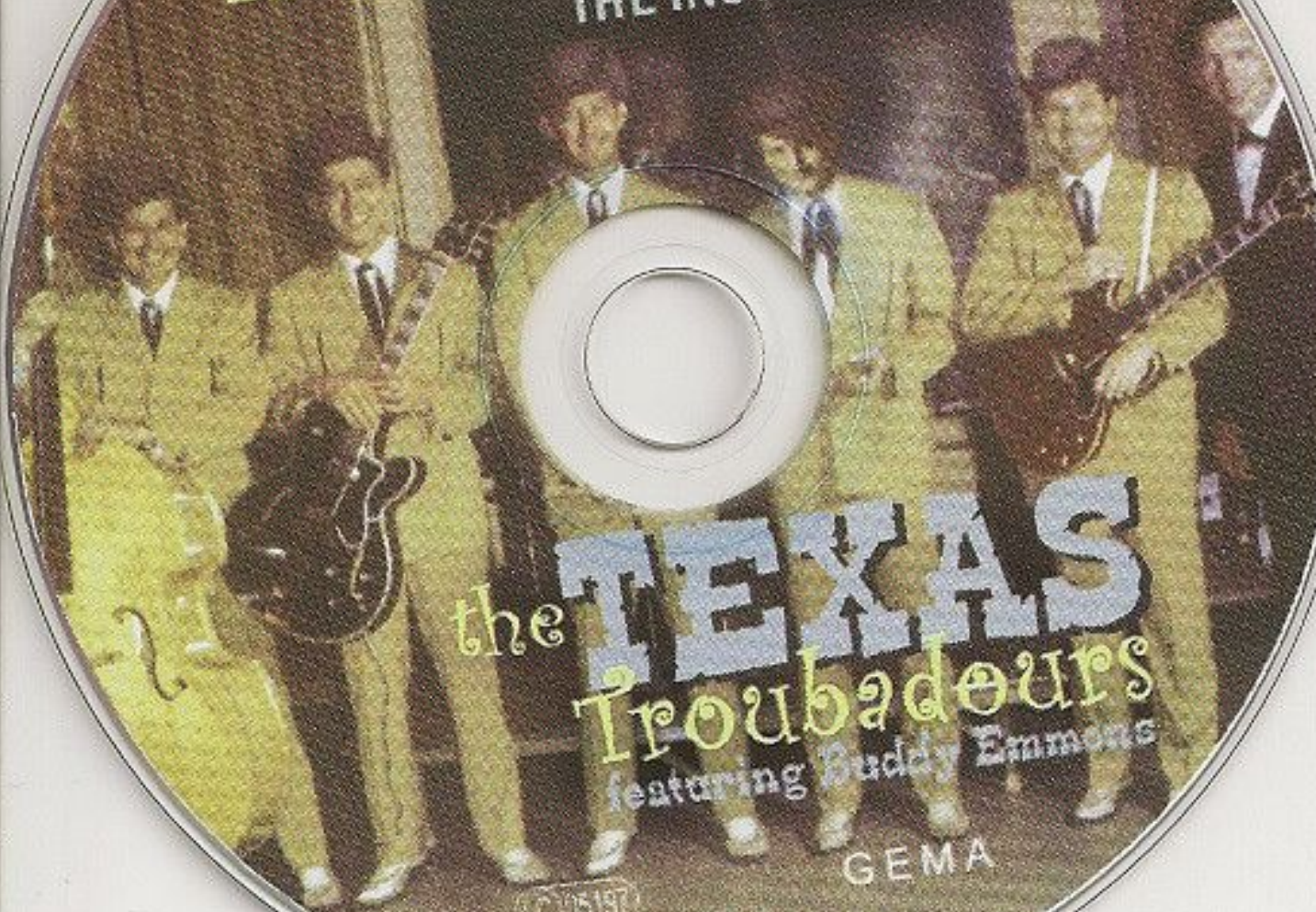
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coverphoto: from left: Jack Drake, Cal Smith, Jack Greene, Leon Rhodes, Buddy Charleton

ERNEST TUBB'S TEXAS TROUBADOURS

Almost To Tulsa

THE INSTRUMENTALS



the **TEXAS**
Troubadours
featuring Buddy Emmons

GEMA

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the **TEXAS** Troubadours



BCD 15946 AH

(LC)05197

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2. Danny Boy © 1998 3:20
3. Tuxedo Junction © 1968 2:11
4. Almost To Tulsa © 1965 2:02
5. Leon's Guitar Boogie (115 459 alt) © 2008 2:44
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8. The Waltz You Saved For Me © 1963 2:26
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